

PRIMITIVE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

SOME twelve years ago the American scholar S. Ives Curtiss published his well-known book *Primitive Semitic Religion To-day*. He drew attention to numerous traces of primitive thought in the religious conceptions of the population of Syria, Palestine and the Sinaitic peninsula. Since the study of folklore and primitive customs has not come to a standstill. It was apparent, from the results of these studies, that we are not able to deal with the questions of the so-called higher criticism, without entering into an inquiry into the origin of many customs and manners of the Israelites. Guided by the light of the study of comparative religion many customs that were formerly supposed to be of late origin proved to contain elements of a very ancient type.

It seems worth while to collect the scattered survivals of primitive religious thought in the Old Testament. They are of importance not only for the Old Testament scholar, but also for the ethnologist, who will easily recognise that the solution of some ethnologic questions may be gathered from the study of old Israelitic customs.

I.

The Israelites once assumed the existence of a mysterious power, that dwelt in all things that lived, and in all things that appeared to contain unseen sources of action. This power was not a separate being, but was an unseen reality consisting of all the scattered parts of it, embodied in

various things and beings. It was found in the streaming water of the river, in the water of the springs and wells, in trees and in rocks, in animals and men, it was everywhere. Though it could not be grasped by the hand, not be seen by the eye, not be tasted by the tongue, nor be smelt by the nostrils, or be heard by the ear, it was a living reality.

The name of this power was Elohim or El, in our versions translated as God. It certainly deserves attention that this translation is quite correct, the word "God" originally being a neuter, like "Regin" the synonym of "God" used in the Edda-songs, as Professor C. C. Uhlenbeck, of Leiden, was kind enough to inform me.

In our Old Testament we can only trace this ancient conception in some expressions and words. "I can" is expressed by the term, "it is for the El of my hand" (Gen. xxxi. 29, Micah ii. 1, Proverbs iii. 27, Deut. xxviii. 32, Nehem. v. 5). The original meaning of this expression can only regard the hand as the seat of an unseen power called "El," by which the actions of the hand are done. We do not find this expression applied to other parts of the body, but other things, that appear to be the seat of great power, are named by words that are etymologically connected with El. In Palestine big trees are rare. The tree is called "Ejil." The same word is used for the strong ram, and a stag is called "Ajjal," this word being another derivation of the same root. In the same way the female animals are often called the "Astart's," the mother-goddesses of the flock, each of these animals being an "Astart" as it possesses the qualities of a mother-goddess and her producing power (Deut. vii. 13, xxviii. 4). The translation of the Revised Version, "the young of thy flock" certainly expresses the general meaning of the verses, but hides the original meaning of the Hebrew text.

In Genesis xxviii. we have an instance of a piece of rock

that appears to Jacob to be the house of a god, a Beth-El. This conclusion is reached by Jacob from the fact that the stone served him as pillow. His head lying on that stone he saw in his dream the heavens opened. This dream proved that the stone was the house of God, a gate of heaven, "and Jacob rose and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up as a sacred pillar and poured oil upon the top of it" (v. 18.)

We further find that all parts of the human body, that seem to be a seat of vital power, are regarded with certain awe, though they are not called by terms which show that they are supposed to be the seats of El, as in the case of the hand.

In the first place the breath is to be mentioned. The breath seems to be life itself. What does not breathe is dead. Human life existed as God formed man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. ii. 7). In case of death the breath seems to leave the body, to escape into some unknown place. Life does not cease but only seems to transplant its essence, the breath, into an unknown abode.

We understand that the Hebrew word for "breath" is the same as the word for "soul" (nefesh). This soul is supposed to live after the death of the body. It has his needs. It does not belong to the human world but to the world of El, it is El. In the well-known story of Saul and the witch of Endor, the woman brings up the spirit of Samuel and calls the apparition a god. "I see Elohim coming up out of the earth" (v. 13). She recognises Samuel by his outward appearance. 'She said, An old man cometh up and he is covered with a robe. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel' (v. 14). Obviously the spirit has the same appearance as the man. Already here we find the same conception we meet also in the New Testament, that everybody

has his "doubleganger," called in later times his "angel" (Acts. xii. 15, Matt. xviii. 10).

This unseen vital power is not to be identified with the human being but seems to excel it. It is a kind of personal "god." The most conspicuous place mentioning this "god" is Leviticus xxiv. 15. "Whosoever curseth his 'god' shall bear his sin, but he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, all the congregation shall certainly stone him." The common explanation identifies "his god" and the Lord, but the Hebrew text shows that in these verses is dealt with two different cases. The term "bear his sin" means "he shall expect the punishment that God will send to him" (cf. Lev. xix. 8, xx. 20, and xx. 21 and 19). In the second case the punishment is to be executed by the Israelites. "His god" corresponds to the "ilu" mentioned in the Assyrian hymns as the personal god, the genius of the worshipper.

Probably this same conception underlies a series of texts in Leviticus xix. and Leviticus xxv., cf. xix. 14, 32, xxv. 17, 36, 43. In all these places we find commandments concerning the behaviour towards fellow-men, supported by the motive "thou shalt fear thy God." In the present text "thy God" certainly is to be explained as Jahve (cf. Lev. xix. 12), but originally "thy God" will have alluded to the "personal God" as may be seen from Leviticus xxv. 17, where we expect "thou shalt fear *me*, for I am the Lord thy God," if "thy God" and the Lord were to be identified. The personal god is the god who represents in the first place humanity, he demands a humane conduct, being something humane himself.

In a later period this personal god became an angel. Ecclesiastes v. 5 (6) warns not to vow and to say afterwards to the angel that it was an error.

In the terms that are used in taking an oath we have an-

other instance of the mysterious power ascribed to human life. It is quite common to invoke the life of a person. "By the life of Pharaoh," "by my life," "by the life of Jahve," "by thy life" are terms used in the same way as the name of a god, who is invoked to protect the oath.

This mysterious vital power is not only connected with the breath but with all things that seem to be a seat of life. Death may be caused by loss of blood. The blood therefore is equal in importance to the breath, and is also "seat of the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11, 14, Gen. ix. 4, Deut. xii. 23). It is not allowed to eat the blood of animals. Blood that is shed, even the blood shed in hunting, must be covered by throwing earth over it. The voice of the blood of Abel cried unto God from the ground (Gen. iv. 10).

Another seat of the vital power is to be found in the hair and the nails. Their continual growth seems to show that they are specially connected with life. It is a well-known fact that the hair and the nails are of the greatest importance in magic all over the world. The story of Samson reminds us that long hair was a proof of great strength. In ordinary life the hair was worn in braids, that were covered by the kerchief, but in times of war the enemy should be impressed by the great strength of its opponents. Then the braids were loosened and the waving hairs were shown (Judges v. 2). It seemed irreligious to cut off the hair and was supposed to be a kind of mutilation. In Leviticus xix. 27 it is forbidden to cut off the points (not the corners as is usually translated) of the hair and of the beard. This is allowed only in special cases. The case of Absalom was an exceptional one. We are told that he pulled his hair at every year's end, because it was heavy on him (2 Sam. xiv. 26). It seems that the hair in ordinary cases was not shortened. It was not possible to leave the nails unpared, but it was usual to bury the paring in order to avoid dangerous influences of it.

The oath mentioned in Genesis xxiv. 2, xlvi. 29 shows that the genitals were also regarded as seats of sacred power.

This personal vital power dwells in men, but is not the necessary condition for their existence as living beings. This power may leave the human body, and can be transplanted by another "spirit" which enters the body after the former vital power has left it.

The most conspicuous instance of this conception is to be found in the ideas connected with sacred and consecrated objects.

The Israelites shared the common opinion that shrines and sacred objects were the dwelling-places of divine beings. They were supposed to be really present in the holy places and objects. But their presence never was thought to be confined to these places. The presence of a god implied that the whole atmosphere surrounding him was filled with an unseen and mysterious holy essence. All things in his neighbourhood were covered by this sacred element. If the gods were of little importance and had not proved to be great and terrible gods the space covered by this element was supposed to be of moderate extent. The influence of great sanctuaries, however, covered miles and miles and reached as far as the sanctuary could be seen. The pilgrims to these sanctuaries marked the spot from which they first discovered the distant sanctuary by heaps of stones. If they are within eyesight of the shrine they are obliged to wear holy clothes and to abstain from all things unclean. Every year the Moslem pilgrims wear the "ihram" (the sacred garments) when they have reached the frontier of the holy territory, that is at a considerable distance from Mekka and Medinah.

The priests, that lived always in close vicinity of their god, were supposed to be filled with his divine presence. They were no longer ordinary men. The high-priest was the

servant of God and consequently had to stay within the precincts of the temple all his life (Lev. xxi. 12). The crown of the anointing oil of his God was upon him, therefore he could not leave the sanctuary without profaning it. He was consecrated by touching his right ear, his right thumb and his right toe with the blood of a sacrifice. We know from present customs (cf. S. I. Curtiss, *Prim. Relig.* p. 152) and from the Zend-Avesta that this is a kind of exorcism, intending to expel evil spirits. The blood of the sacrifice expels the common spirit of life, and the sacred oil with which he is anointed introduces into him another vital element, he is sanctified by the Lord Himself (Lev. xxi. 15).

The other priests too are sacred, but according to their lower position they enjoy more freedom than the high-priest did. Originally they were not anointed. In the older part of the legislation it is only the high-priest that is to be anointed by the sacred oil (Exod. xxix. 5 ff.), but the exorcistic ceremony was also applied on them. They were allowed to leave the precincts of the temple, but it was forbidden to wear the priestly garments in the streets. These garments were to be left in one of the rooms of the inner-gate of the temple (Ezek. xliv. 19). Their holiness was inferior to that of the high priest, as is shown by Ezekiel xliv. 18. They shall have linen dresses, they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat. This is desired of the common priests, but not of the high-priest. The sweat is supposed to be a seat of the mysterious vital power. The common priests were not anointed in the pre-exilic period. The divine element dwelt not in them like in the high-priest, consequently they must take care not to sweat, their sweat being part of their unsacred elements.

Every priest must avoid such things as appear to contain a powerful spirit if they are serving in the temple. Especially wine and spirits seem to introduce a spirit in the man

who takes them. Wine and strong drink were forbidden to Aaron and his sons when they went into the sacred tent (Lev. x. 8). This has nothing to do with fear that they might infringe the rules of the ritual if they were not perfectly sober. No other spirit was allowed to come in the holy presence of God.

Even in the post-exilic time we find the survival of these conceptions in the prescript for the hallowing of the Levites (Num. viii. 5 ff.). Moses shall take the Levites and cleanse them by sprinkling water of expiation upon them and by shaving "all their flesh." All the hair that is connected with their natural vital element is to be removed.

The people of Israel was holy as well. Already in the old legislation of the Book of the Covenant the holiness of the people is mentioned. "Ye shall be holy men unto me, therefore ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beast in the field" (Exod. xxii. 31). It is forbidden to eat the blood of animals, for the soul of the animal is in the blood, and in eating it this soul would enter into their bodies. Their holiness is inferior to that of the priests. It is not strong enough to consecrate the things that are touched by them, as would have been the case with the priests if they had walked in their holy garments in the streets, but it demands that the Israelites regard their body as sacred to God and do not mutilate it. Holy things must be perfect. No man that had a blemish was allowed to act as priest. The holy people of Jahve was not allowed to cut itself, nor to make any baldness between the eyes for the dead (Deut. xiv. 1 ff.), nor to print any marks on them (Lev. xix. 28) by tattooing. They should bind the protecting knots and signs on their hands and between their eyes (Deut. vi. 8) without mutilating their flesh.

For the same reason it is forbidden to inquire of the dead. The soul of the dead was supposed to enter into the sorcerer

and to reveal itself by using his speech (Lev. xx. 27). The Israelite would become the bearer of a spirit alien to his own. This can be permitted only in one case, if it is the spirit of God Himself that chooses to enter into him and to use him for revealing the commandments of the Lord.

The prophets were men seized by the spirit of God. They did not speak themselves, the Spirit of God spoke by means of their tongue. So we understand that the prophet becomes another man, though his outward appearance remains the same. 1 Sam. x. 6 it is foretold by Samuel that Saul shall prophesy and shall be turned into another man. The prophet is to the spirit of God what the garments are for a man. The Spirit of God used Gideon as a garment (Judges vi. 34), dressed in Amasai (1 Chron. xii. 18, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20). The hand of the Lord came upon them (2 Kings iii. 15), they were therefore holy men, men of Elohim. The story of Elisha shows that the prophet had shaved his head (2 Kings ii. 23). Probably this is to be explained in the same way as the ceremony of the cleansing of the Levites. All that is connected with the old vital power is to be removed if a new vital element is to enter the body. In such cases the head was shaved and the nails were pared (Deut. xxi. 12). The baldness of the head mentioned in 2 Kings ii. 23 shows that Elisha was not long ago initiated as a prophet.

Even those prophets who seem to us to write down the results of their own meditations and expectations emphasise that they do not bring their own messages but the words of God, sent by God unto them. The prophecies of Ezekiel were spoken after eating the divine book-roll that was sweet as honey (Ezek. iii. 1 ff.). God Himself placed His words into the mouth of Jeremiah (Jer. i. 7 ; cf. also Isa. vi.). The spirit of God within the prophet is no symbol of an exalted human mind, a deep religious feeling or severe morality, or of anything of pure human origin, but of the revelation of

God Himself unto mankind. It was a divine reality living and acting among men.

II.

It is important to realise the ancient conceptions of soul and vital elements. In the history of the religion of Israel many things have been explained as non-Israelitic elements which are perfectly understood in the light of primitive religious thought.

Here, in the first place, the laws on the Nazarite are to be mentioned (Num. vi. 1-22). The Nazarite makes a special vow not to drink wine and strong drink, nor anything that is made of wine, strong drink and grapes. All the days of his vow he shall not shave his head nor come near to a dead body, even of his father, his mother, his brother or his sister, because his separation unto God is upon his head. This is supposed to be the later development of an original Nazariteship lasting the whole lifetime. The framers of the legal ordinance of Numbers vi. are said to have had no comprehension of the original Nazarite vow; that would have been in ancient time much less strict than afterwards (*Enc. Bibl.* 3363). By the sixth century B.C. the Nazarite vow would have lost its old simplicity. The abstention from wine is explained by the theory that the Nazarite represents the old Israelitish ideal of nomadic life. The Nazariteship assumed for a limited period as supposed in Numbers vi. is ascribed to the post-exilic legislators.

The whole theory of the development of this vow from a natural and simple one into an artificial one, that became connected with the temple in Jerusalem, is highly improbable.

The abstention from wine cannot be explained by the old Israelitish ideal of life, as the Hebrews never were nomads, who did not know the culture of the vine (cf. Gen. xxvii. 25). It follows by no means from Judges xiii. and 1 Samuel i.

that the original form of the Nazariteship is a vow for the whole lifetime, as it is expressly emphasised that Samson shall be a Nazarite from the womb to the day of his death (Judg. xiii. 7.) and that Samuel shall be given to the Lord "all the days of his life." It is not justifiable to conclude from this that *every* vow as Nazarite was a vow for the whole lifetime. The abstention from wine is easily understood by the view that the wine contained a spiritual power that should not enter the body of a person that had separated himself unto God. The Rechabites are very often quoted as an instance of original nomadic life in old Israel, but the Rechabites are descendants of the Kenites, the travelling blacksmiths of the desert, and have nothing to do with the vow of the Nazarites (cf. EXPOSITOR for August, 1908, p. 129).

The rules for the vow of the Nazarite are not only important for the history of Israel, but also for ethnology, as the so-called hair-offering is placed here in the right light. Many travellers have noticed that it is a custom with numerous tribes in all parts of the world to cut off the hair at various occasions and to burn it or to deposit it in some holy place. It is generally accepted that the hair is offered to some divine power. Robertson Smith holds the opinion that this offering served the purpose of binding together in close union the worshipper and his God, or (in other cases) to create a bond of consecration between the dead and the living.

Another explanation assumes that the offering of the hair is a *pars pro toto* and is a substitute for the offering of a man or woman. The legislation of Numbers vi. makes it very probable that this so-called hair-offering was no offering at all, but simply a ceremony connected with the view that various vital elements may enter into man in different periods of his life. If a new period begins all that is connected is to be renewed. Therefore the hair is cut off in all these cases that a person passes from a period of holiness,

or from a period of mourning, into common life, or was initiated into a new period of life.

When the days of the vow are fulfilled the Nazarite has to bring three offerings, a burnt-offering, a sin-offering and a "sacrifice of peace" (shelem). He shall shave his head and put the hair on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace-offerings (v. 18). In the articles dealing with the Nazarite this is usually explained as putting the hair on the altar, and is said to be an offering of the hair. (*Encyc. Bibl.* 3363). The meat of a peace-offering was cooked in a pot in the court of the temple. According to the Hebrew text the hair was to be put on this fire. The fire of the altar did not burn "under the sacrifice of peace." The fat of this sacrifice was burned on the altar-fire, and the fire of the altar is never said "to burn under" the parts that are offered. This implies that the hair is simply burned and not offered. The hair was sacred because the Nazarite was a sacred person during the time of his vow. He cannot return into common life without leaving his hair in the temple.

In the same way we find that in other religions the hair is cut off if a new period of life begins. Robertson Smith was perfectly right in saying "the hair offering of youths and maidens (in Syria) was a ceremony of religious initiation." The hair was allowed to grow unshaven from birth to adolescence. Entering into the status of social maturity they had to shave their heads, like the foreign woman that enters into an Israelitish family had to shave her head and to pare her nails. This custom is parallel to the supposed hair-offerings of the pilgrims who have finished their pilgrimage to Mekka or in ancient times to the sanctuaries of Byblus and Bambyce (cf. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 313). There is nothing artificial or heathenish in the regulations of the vow of the Nazarite.

Another kind of offering that has been no offering at all

are the so-called Building-offerings (Bau-opfer), i.e. human sacrifices that were brought when a new building was erected. An instance of this "offering" is mentioned 1 Kings. xvi. 34. Hiel rebuilt Jericho. He laid the foundation thereof with Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof with his youngest son Segub. Of these foundation sacrifices many examples were found during the excavations of the last years in Palestine (cf. Driver, *Schweich lectures*, 1908, p. 71). The term "offering" and "sacrifice" implies that these children and adults, of which the bones were found under the foundation, are supposed to be offered to some divine power. But this was not the case. The spirit of the deceased was supposed to protect the foundations and to ensure their stability. Its mere existence was sufficient for this purpose. They were not offered as a gift to a god in order to persuade him to protect the house, but protected it themselves. The death of the children and men was the only possible way of creating the protecting power that was needed. The belief still exists to-day in southern China and elsewhere. It was a mistake to call all cases in which men were killed for religious purposes "offerings."

The study of primitive thought is of great importance for the so-called worship of the dead. The theory has been defended that the cult of the dead is the base of the worship of the gods. The mourning customs were explained as ritual ceremonies connected with the cult of the dead. Even they who feel inclined to deny that religion is based on this cult are ready to assume that the mourning customs owe their origin to some form of worship of the dead. (cf. *Enc. Bibl.* 3222; R. Smith, *Rel. of the Sem.* 306).

A thorough investigation into the meaning of all the customs is not in favour of this theory, as it is only possible to explain some of the customs by it but not all. Some customs even point in the opposite direction. If we study

these customs in the light of primitive religious thought we find that scholars wrongly have explained many things that intend to protect men against the spirits of the dead as elements of a kind of religious worship. It is true that everywhere the mourners provide for the need of the dead, but this is not to be mistaken for a general worship of the dead. Only the spirits of those, who were of great importance and extraordinary power, were venerated and worshipped after their death. The ordinary man, however, was no god. His relations placed food on his tomb but did not expect that his spirit would be able to do what they suppose may be done by the spirit of a prophet or some holy man.

The mourners rent their garments, covered their head, or at least their mouth, they sat in the dust of the floor and sprinkled ashes on their heads. They fasted, and dressed in a simple shirt, called "saq" and went barefoot. They shaved the head and the beard, made incisions in the hand or other places of the skin. The first food they took after fasting was offered to them by their neighbours. They never took food from their own house.

All these customs have been explained as parts of the cult of the dead. The garments were rent as a preparation to the mourning dress. The saq is supposed to be the garment that was usual in ancient times and that survived only in the old religious customs of the cult of the dead. The head was shaved in order to be able to give the hair as an offering to the dead, the incisions in the skin were made because the blood was also to be offered to him. Fasting was practised and no shoes were put on because the worshipper that shall appear before his god goes barefoot and fasts. Some customs, however, could not be explained in this way. The mouth was covered, the mourner sat in the dust, he took the bread of mourning from his friends. These customs

were not easily understood as ceremonies occurring in the worship of heathen gods or spirits. Moreover this theory does not correspond to the legislation about clean and unclean.

The mourner was unclean and could not be purified until seven days after the case of death. This was also interpreted as a proof of the original religious character of these customs. What was clean in the cult of a god was said to be unclean in the cult of another god. We cannot enter here into an exhaustive treatment of the original meaning of the terms clean and unclean, which is not sufficiently explained by this theory, but draw here only attention to the fact that the legislation in Leviticus xxi. disagrees with it.

It is forbidden that the high-priest shall go in to any dead body even of his father and mother. The ordinary priest shall not defile himself for the dead among his people, except for his kin that is near unto him, for his mother and for his father, for his son, his daughter, his brother and for his sister if she is a virgin. In the worship of the dead the nearest relations are of great importance. The ancestor is the real family-god. Now it is highly improbable that the Jahvistic legislators, who wished to abolish the heathenish rites of the worship of the dead would have forbidden that the ordinary priest should mourn for his relations, but would have made an exception for those cases which were the very base of the heathenish customs and worship.

Numbers xix. 15 contains the key to the solution of this question. "Every open vessel (in a room in which a man died) which has no covering bound upon it is unclean." This implies that something must enter into the vessel that causeth the uncleanness. This can only be something that is connected with the dead. If we examine other burial customs it appears that it is dreaded that the soul of the

deceased will hide itself somewhere. It remains with the corpse and likes to stay with the living relations. This is to be prevented. The soul of the dead no longer belongs to the realm of the living. If the spirit of the deceased succeeded in penetrating into some body of the mourners, this could only endanger the personal vital power of this person. Therefore the openings of the head are covered and sheltered against this spirit by a cover that is wrapped round the head. For the same reason the mourner used to sit in the dust on the floor. We possess some Roman figures which show very clearly that all the openings of the body were supposed to be possible entrances for unseen spiritual beings. Every open vessel might become the seat of the soul of the deceased. No food that was in the house was to be taken by the mourners, they might consume the "soul" with it. So the food is brought from outside by friends when the period of fasting is finished.

It was believed that the spiritual fluid, of which the soul was supposed to consist, could not attach itself to anything broken or rent. This is the reason of the rending of the garments. According to the rabbinical regulations the garments must be rent in the very moment that the last breath leaves the corpse. Then the simplest kind of garment, the saq, is worn. In order to prevent the spirit from hiding somewhere to-day the saq very often is seamed with white tape, white being the colour that keeps off the spirits.

Notwithstanding all these mourning customs, that intended to prevent the soul of the deceased from entering into the mourner himself or into something belonging to him, they felt not sure about the success of their measures. The burial usually takes place on the same day, but the mourner was supposed to be unclean during seven days. "On the third and seventh days a clean person shall sprinkle " water

of separation" (holy-water) upon him and on the seventh day he shall wash his clothes and take a bath. After that he shall be clean at even" (Num. xix. 19). It was also a custom to cut off the hair with the view of removing every part of the spirit that might have succeeded in entering into them. For the same reason it was usual to shed some blood for removing the spirit if it had penetrated into the blood. Neither the cutting of the hair nor the bloodshed were offerings; and with a cult of the dead these customs have nothing to do.

We find in the Old Testament numerous places in which the mourning customs are mentioned without any objection being made against them. It is not forbidden to rend the garments, nor to cover the head or to go barefoot, to fast, etc. The only customs that are forbidden are those that mutilate the body. "Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead, for thou art an holy people" (Deut. xiv. 1 ff., Lev. xix. 28). From these last words interpreters have drawn the conclusion that these customs occurred in the worship of the dead. We fail to understand why only these customs would have been forbidden and why many other customs, that (according to the theories of Schwally, Stade, etc.) also were connected with the cult of the dead met no objection from the side of the legislators. The primitive conceptions are sufficient to explain all the mourning customs and the theory that the cult of the dead is the oldest form of religion in Israel as elsewhere is entirely in the air.

J. Benzinger, the writer of the article on mourning customs in the *Encyc. Bibl.*, combats the view of Professor J. G. Frazer, who explained a large proportion of the mourning customs of various peoples as typifying a complete renunciation of the spirit of the departed and pretended that such an explanation of mourning customs is impossible

where Semitic peoples are concerned. The aim of the mourner was, according to Benzinger, to maintain his connexion with the dead.

I suppose that Frazer was perfectly right. There is no reason to separate the customs of the Semites from those of other nations. We find the most striking uniformity of mourning customs all over the world because they are all based on the same conception of life.

I will not deny that in many cases the spirits of the departed were objects of a religious cult, that prayers were and are addressed to numerous saints, that many a tomb is a place of pilgrimage. But we should notice that these men were already extraordinary men when living. The man who was a holy man, a man of God, as he lived among his contemporaries, is supposed to be able to bless and to give prosperity after his death. The spirits of other men may become dangerous if their relations do not provide for proper food and drink on their graves, but they never become powerful gods by the mere fact of their death. The theory that the worship of the dead is the base of religion is not sufficiently supported by an investigation into the original meaning of the mourning customs.

In the *EXPOSITOR* for November 1909, p. 459 ff., I have drawn attention to some other instances of primitive conceptions in the Old Testament. The days of the unleavened bread appeared to be connected with the conceptions of primitive mankind about the growth of the crops. Every plant is supposed to contain a part of the general vital power and is regarded as the seat of a living soul. I argued from parallels in India that in the days of the harvest no leaven was used for fear of chasing the soul of the plant by the proximity of the unclean leaven, the leavening of the meal being a kind of putrefaction.

In *Leviticus xix*, we find other instances of the influence of

these old views on Israelitish customs. It is to be noted that they are mentioned together with commandments of a purely ethical nature (Lev. xix. 17 ff.): "Thou shalt not hate thy brother," "thou shalt not take vengeance" precedes "thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind; thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed, neither shall there come upon thee a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together.

If two kinds of seed were sown the whole crop would be "hallowed," i.e. it would not be allowed to consume the crops of this field (Deut. xxii. 9). Every plant has its own vital element; to bring two different elements together into one field would endanger the existence of the plants. The life of animals seems to prove that the power of procreation is killed when cattle of different kinds gender. The young that are born in this case cannot multiply. The growth of plants was supposed to be of the same kind and nature as the procreation of animals. The field that was sown became fertile when the field spirits and demons, the fauns (seirim) passed through it. All over the world many symbolic actions were practised with the view to promote the fertility of the field. Deuteronomy xxii. 10 forbids to plow with cattle and with asses together, for the fertility of the field might be damaged by it. Even the products of plants and of the hair of animals were seats of special vital elements on which their strength and solidity depended, and it was considered unwise to make garments of mingled stuff.

It is not easy for us to transplant ourselves into this primitive atmosphere. Many of these customs are no longer understood by later generations. In some instances this has been the cause of great trouble for millions of believers, as the scholars who explained the sacred customs have been induced to conclude from these customs things that have nothing to do with the original meaning of the

customs, but became nevertheless a great burden on the succeeding generations who trusted their conclusions.

An instance of this we find in the old commandment "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk" (Exod. xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26, Deut. xiv. 21). Professor Frazer has noticed that many African tribes believe that the fertility of the mother may be injured by what is done to the milk, the milk being the seat of the vital power that lives also in the animal. We understand that it must have seemed exceedingly dangerous for the fertility of the mother to seethe a young kid in the milk of the mother, i.e. to use the milk of the mother that is seat of the vital element to prepare the kid. We are therefore not astonished to find this commandment already in the oldest legislation, in the Book of the Covenant.

Later generations only knew the commandment, but the primitive ideas from which it originated had become unknown and had died out. Then the theologians had to explain it, for it was part of the sacred thora. The Mishna (Chullin 8) interpreted it as a commandment not to seethe any meat in milk. This is only allowed in cooking fowls that come from the egg. The milk of the mother was replaced by all milk and the kid by meat. From the milk was concluded that the products of milk, the cheese and the butter were also included. No Jew is allowed to place cheese and meat or butter and meat in one dish, or to consume a dish made from meat and butter. This has led again to numerous other questions. Is it allowed for people staying in an hotel to eat meat when at the same time another man sitting at the same table eats cheese? The answer to this question is that it is permitted if each man has spread before him a separate table cloth and both seem to be dining at separate tables. Hundreds of questions have sprung up from this rabbinical interpretation of the old

commandment. The primitive religious ideas are not only interesting for scholars, but might have even importance for present religious life.

B. D. EERDMANS.

*THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT
AND EXPERIENCE.*

I PROPOSE to arrange this paper under three main heads :—

I. The Psychology of Beginnings—a discussion of the origins of religion and its most primitive forms.

II. The Psychology of Re-Beginnings, under which fall the phenomena of Conversion and its related movements.

III. The Psychology of Growth, dealing with the relation of religion or faith to other activities of the soul, and its expansion into ethics, conduct, or character.

These divisions are not mutually exclusive, as no part of a living organism is absolutely exclusive of the conditions or activity of the other parts—the root is present and active in the topmost leaf of the tree, and the leaf is necessary on its part to the root.

I. *The Psychology of Beginnings in Religion.*

In order to state the principle which gives continuity to this paper—as it were, the backbone and spinal cord of the anatomy of the subject—I must trench a little on the ground of the Philosophy of Religion. One's theory of the origin as well as the development of religion, whether in the race or in the individual, depends very greatly on one's theory of the origin and development of the world itself. There is, for example, a theory from which I wish to distinguish my own, that usually known as the materialistic. Roughly speaking, it explains or seeks to explain the whole scheme of things and the course of evolution by its beginnings. It returns to the shapeless mass of the nebulae, and says that